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SUBJECT: CHILD TRAFFICKING IN GUINEA'S FOREST REGION

¶1. (U) SUMMARY. Local NGOs tell Embassy officials that the Forest Region is a transit hub for the trafficking of children from Guinea to neighboring Liberia and Sierra Leone, highlighting the need for cross-border coordination and information sharing. Specific cases provide examples of how these children are being trafficked. Despite general agreement that Guinea is a source of supply, reliable information is hard to find regarding the demand for trafficked children in neighboring countries. This cable is the first of a series of reports on child trafficking in Guinea. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) During a trip to N'Zerekore and surrounding towns the week of April 20-25, Asst Poloff met with local NGOs working to combat child trafficking in Guinea's forest region, including Sabou Guinea, the Association to Combat the Exploitation of Children and Women (ACEEF), and the Research-Action and Literacy Association (AGRAAD). Upon return to Conakry, Asst Poloff met with a contact at the Judicial Police regarding child trafficking issues in the Forest Region.

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NGO ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION  
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¶3. (U) Asst Poloff met with Mamadou Cisse, the Regional Director of Sabou Guinea, who said that they participate in a working group started by UNICEF that monitors child trafficking incidents occurring in the Forest Region. Sabou Guinea trains border officials to identify child traffickers. When a trafficker is apprehended on the border, local authorities are supposed to place the victims into the custody of Sabou Guinea. Sabou Guinea also identifies street children who were trafficked to sell products or beg in N'Zerekore. Sabou Guinea takes the street children into protective custody and reports the trafficker to the authorities for investigation.

¶4. (U) Asst Poloff held a joint meeting with Jean Louis Maomy, the Executive Director of AGRAAD, and Serge Sossou, the Director of ASEEF. Both organizations outlined their respective projects to combat child trafficking throughout Guinea. In Guinea's Forest Region, AGRAAD is mapping cross-border towns and dense migration points to identify routes susceptible to child trafficking. ASEEF projects throughout Guinea focus on educational and vocational training for trafficking victims. Mr. Sossou said ASEEF is currently opening an office in the Forest Region.

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NGOS: TRAFFICKING PREVALENT IN FOREST REGION  
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¶5. (U) All three NGOs said that child trafficking is widespread in the forest region of Guinea because of the porous border and constant trans-border movement of Guineans, Liberians, and Ivorians. Mr. Cisse from Sabou Guinea said that their organization is active in other regions of Guinea, but the magnitude of child trafficking is highest in the Forest Region. He said that in the Forest Region, Sabou Guinea handles 1-2 child trafficking incidents per month, most

of which involve cases of children trafficked from Kankan heading to Liberia. Mr. Cisse said he did not know where in Liberia the children were being taken and for what reason.

¶6. (U) Mr. Maomy from AGRAAD said that the plethora of cross-border communities in the Forest Region creates a mechanism for traffickers to easily sneak children across the border. He said that AGRAAD's foremost problem is the lack of cross-border coordination and info-sharing between government and non-government partners on the border. To combat this problem, AGRAAD participates in Cross-Border Monitoring Meetings that involve NGOs and governments from Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Cote D'Ivoire. This network seeks to enhance coordination, share information and make recommendations for monitoring and investigating child trafficking cases on the borders.

¶7. (U) During the joint meeting with AGRAAD and ASEEF, there were a few moments of disagreement between Mr. Maomy and Mr. Sossou. For example, the gentlemen debated about whether certain situations of guardianship, such as entrusting a family/community member to transport one's children, should be considered as trafficking. In addition, when Mr. Sossou said that Guinea was only a TIP "receiving country," Mr. Maomy jumped in saying that Guinea was a "receiving, sending and transit country." Mr. Sossou immediately corrected himself and continued on with his presentation about the accomplishments of ASEEF.

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RECENT TRAFFICKING CASES IN FOREST REGION  
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¶8. (U) Asst Poloff met with Commissioner Bakary Camara from the Conakry Judicial Police, who said that child trafficking is a

CONAKRY 00000196 002 OF 002

significant problem in the Forest Region. He cited two 2008 incidents in which Guinean children were reportedly trafficked to Liberia where they were to be sold. In the first case, the Liberian police in Monrovia apprehended a woman who was reportedly trying to sell a kidnapped girl from N'Zerekore. In the second case, a man from Kankan was apprehended by Liberian police for trying to sell his son in Monrovia. Mr. Bakary said that both alleged traffickers are being detained in Liberia waiting extradition to Guinea, and the children have been returned to relatives in Guinea. When asked why traffickers from Kankan would take children to Liberia rather than other neighboring countries, Mr. Bakary explained that nobody would purchase the children in Mali; the demand for children is in Liberia.

¶9. (U) Mr. Cisse from Sabou Guinea told Asst Poloff about a February 2008 child trafficking case where a victim escaped to local authorities and was turned over to Sabou Guinea. According to Mr. Cisse, the boy said that a truck driver was taking three children, aged 11 to 14, to Liberia. In Kankan, the truck driver reportedly asked the three children for assistance in transporting his shipment to a nearby town. Rather than stopping at the town, he continued on towards the Guinean-Liberian border. Mr. Cisse said the local authorities are investigating the case, but Sabou Guinea expects that the other two children are already in Liberia. In the separate meeting with the Judicial Police, Mr. Bakary said he was unaware of the case.

¶10. (U) According to Mr. Maomy from AGRAAD, who provided another recent example, in February a man from Kissidougou allegedly took his son to Freetown to sell him into child labor. The man was reportedly apprehended by the Sierra Leonean authorities and the child returned to Guinea where he remains in the custody of a local NGO. Mr. Maomy said that AGRAAD is working with both local and Sierra Leonean authorities to transfer the man to Guinea to be prosecuted. In the separate meeting with the Judicial Police, Mr. Bakary reported that the man was still being detained by Liberian officials but that his unit is working to have the man extradited to Guinea for his trial.

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COMMENT

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¶11. (SBU) Over the next several weeks, Embassy will continue to investigate child trafficking issues in Guinea in order to develop a better sense of the magnitude and nature of the problem. With respect to Guinea's Forest Region, information obtained to date suggests that most, if not all, of the children trafficked through the region are part of a supply chain feeding into neighboring countries, rather than a response to demand within Guinea. There was no indication that the Forest Region is an end destination for trafficked children from other countries. For example, contacts could not cite specific cases of Liberian, Sierra Leonean, or Ivorian children being trafficked into Guinea. END COMMENT.

CARTER